



OLDE NEWS

EAST • PROVIDENCE • HISTORICAL • SOCIETY
• NEWSLETTER •

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Onna Williams, who is East Providence's Affirmative Action Officer and a collector of Black Americana, spoke about her Cape Verdean roots at the February meeting with such color and candor that her enthusiasm was contagious.

She has brought new life to the Historical Society. Not only did she sign up to become a member that very night, but she also volunteered to help the Artifacts/Museum Committee with their oral history project. We're very excited that we will be able to add this important Cape Verdean facet to our project.

To have a true museum of East
cont. page 2

MEETING



THE MARCH MEETING
OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
will be held March 26, 1990
from 7:15 pm
at Newman Congregational
Church.
Guest Speaker David Kelleher
presents his Carousel Slides
*coffee and refreshments
will be served*

PRESIDENT'S LETTER *cont.*

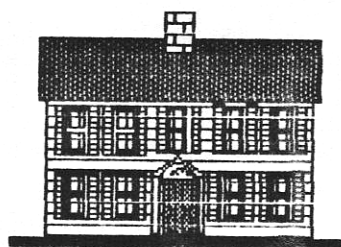
Providence history at Hunts Mills we need to tell all of the story. A good way to preserve the history of the various ethnic groups in East Providence is for their descendants to join us and help fill in the blanks.

While I'm on the subject of new beginnings, I should mention that elections for officers are right around the corner. I said at the February meeting that I would gladly step aside if someone else wants to be President next year.

Although we've joked about my being President for Life, I don't think that would be good for me or for the Society. I don't think any one should be President for too long, or riskgetting so inextricably linked to the Historical Society that people can't think of one without the other.

We must realize that it takes many people to accomplish the goals we've set and we must cultivate new and ever-changing leadership to insure that the Society will continue to belong to all who care about East Providence history, not just to a chosen few.

Claudette Field



OLDE NEWS

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The East Providence Historical Society
Editor George Field

EAST PROVIDENCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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East Providence, Rhode Island 02916
Telephone 438-1750

OFFICERS

President	Claudette Field
First Vice-President	Michael Charves
Second Vice-President	Virginia Berwick
Secretary	Lura Sellow
Corresponding Secretary	Rose Marie Sirenski
Treasurer	Martha Rivas
Assistant Treasurer	Greta Charves

BOARD MEMBERS

Members at Large	Alyce (Billie) Arden
	Ellen O'Hare
	Nancy Stevens

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Artifacts	Edna Anness
Grant Writing	Jewel Drickamer
House Plaques	Katherine Rodman
Hunt House Restoration	G. Fales Peirce
Membership	Virginia Berwick
Newsletter	George Field
Mailing subcommittee	Florence Adams
Preservation	Nancy Moore
Publicity	Florence Adams
Safety and Security	Scott Booth
Ways and Means	W. and M. Vincent

PRESERVATION**COMMITTEE**

Great Graffiti News! As of March 5, the graffiti on the porch walls of the Weaver House has vanished, hopefully never to return. Our thanks to City Manager Lemont for responding quickly to our request.

Bridgham Farm Update

There has been an exciting development (or non-development) at the Farm. The developer, the Robbins Group, has filed for Chapter 11 and closed its Providence office. This event is encouraging news for the group which has organized to investigate a buy-out of the property. The Historical Society, the East Providence Land Conservation Trust, the East Providence Coalition and a neighborhood group will be meeting this month with the Nature Conservancy, a national organization which is dedicated to preserving open space such as Bridgham Farm. If all goes well, Bridgham Farm may end up being protected forever.

The "Not-So-Great Light Of Our Life": By now, you may have seen firsthand the light fix-

ture at the intersection of Pawtucket Avenue and Pleasant Street. If you would care to comment in writing about this fixture, please send all opinions to:

RI Historical Preservation
Commission

Att: Mr. Rick Greenwood
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

Note: This committee has sent Mr. Greenwood pictures of the completed pole and its hanging lights along with a picture of its counterpart on North Main Street, a graceful, appropriate, and more historically sensitive pole.

The Society has also sent the same pictures and a press release to the local media. Our thanks to Mike Charves who took time out of his busy schedule to shoot and develop these telling photos on short notice. *Nancy Moore*

If you are concerned about a piece of historic property in your neighborhood, contact the Preservation Committee and alert them to the problem!

WAYS AND MEANS

The Ways and Means Committee needs help! Specifically, help for the 3rd Annual Pasta Supper on March 31st. Volunteers are needed to help with all phases of the dinner and clean-up, so if you are a shy person and like to work behind the scenes, or a manic extrovert, the Historical Society needs you! There will be sign-up sheets at the March meeting. Those of you who are selling tickets please get them sold and the money to the Committee by the March meeting at the latest.

If you want to reserve tickets, call 431-2055 or 438-1750. At

\$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children under ten they make wonderful Easter gifts. Or belated Christmas gifts. Or a mad-cap night out on the town for cheap.

The Committee is considering publishing a cookbook of old recipes. If anyone out there has a favorite recipe handed down from grandma or even older, and would like to share it with the world, let us know.

And some great news on the Murder Mystery Dinner front: One night, May 4 has already been sold out!

TAX CREDITS

There is a new incentive in Rhode Island to encourage the maintenance and rehabilitation of historic properties: a state income tax credit equal to ten percent of the cost of preservation work done after July 10, 1989.

In order to qualify, the rehabilitated structure must be owner-occupied and on the RI

Register of Historic Places or subject to local historic district controls. The work must also be approved by the RI Historical Preservation Commission.

Potential applicants should contact the Commission (at 277-2678) *before* beginning the project to see if it will qualify.

WHO'S WHO, WHAT'S WHAT

Quick, what is the difference between the RI Historical Society and the RI Historical Preservation Commission and the Providence Preservation Society? Do *you* know?

People who should know better, even ardent preservationists, often confuse these three separate and very different entities.

The R.I. Historical Preservation Commission, whose offices are on the Old State House on Benefit Street in Providence, is the state office for historic preservation. It administers federal and state grant and loan programs for preservation and reviews publicly funded projects among other things.

The Providence Preservation Society, whose offices are on Meeting Street in Providence, was started by Antoinette Downing and others who were fighting to preserve the wealth of historic property on College Hill. They are responsible for saving Providence's famous "Mile of History" on Benefit Street and for

educating people to the importance of architectural preservation. They have since spread their influence beyond the East Side to other areas of the city such as the Armory District, Elmwood and Broadway.

The RI Historical Society is the keeper of the state's historical past. Their headquarters are in the John Brown house on Benevolent Street in Providence and they operate an excellent historical library on Hope Street.

In East Providence we have a **Historic Properties Study and Designation Commission** which was appointed by the City Council to identify and study the city's historic properties and to make recommendations to the City Council about possible plans of action for their preservation. And finally we have our very own **East Providence Historical Society**, organized to conserve and preserve historical artifacts which pertain to East Providence.



HUNT HOUSE UPDATE



Clifford (Jack) Renshaw came to the Hunt House March 8 at the Board's request to give us a progress report on the restoration process. His comments were for the most part very favorable and encouraging. A major result of his visit was a decision to compile the guidelines of the U.S. Dept. of Interior into a "Bible of Restoration" which would always be on hand at the Hunt House. In addition, each of the volunteers working in the house would receive a copy. The intent of all of this is to insure that we adhere to the guidelines as best we can. If there is a question as to how to proceed, the "Bible" is consulted. If that fails to help, then a Building Committee representative, Scott Booth or Pat Millette is contacted, and if that fails, we do nothing until a consensus is reached by the volunteers and the Building Committee and if necessary the full Board of Directors.

The reason behind this caution and double checking is simply that if we fail to comply with the guidelines, we are defaulting in our lease agreement with the city and also putting our grant applications in jeopardy. This may result in some slow going in the restoration process, but it is felt that caution rather than haste is the best policy for a house that has, after all, been standing for more than two hundred years. A few more days one way or the other shouldn't make much difference.

The long awaited alarm system is in the process of being installed, even as we speak, by the winner of our bid-off, J-Cor. The contractor estimates installation will take about three weeks. His progress is being monitored by the Building Committee.

Come to the Mystery Dinner and check out the progress for yourself!

MUSEUM COMMITTEE

The Museum Committee met on Feb. 15th and voted to accept the gifts mentioned last month: a bed with quilt, antique eye-glasses, and two Rumford Chemical Company signs. We also accepted the loan of the antique map of Rehoboth. Plans were discussed for a Victorian Christmas Room at our December Open House. Earl Berwick, Jr. responded to our request for a van and after many adventures the two display cases given by the Rehoboth Antiquarian Society are now at the Hunt House ready for our next display, possibly next May.

Meetings with the School Department are arranged to formulate a program for seventh graders (at first) introducing them to the historic buildings and sites within East Providence with a bus tour followed by a picnic lunch at the Hunt House and an interpretation of life such as it was at Hunt's Mills in the eighteenth century. More news on this later.

Onna Williams, our guest speaker in February, has volunteered to do oral histories with residents of Cape Verdean

descent who have lived in East Providence for many, many generations and who are a very integral part of our city's history.

Clint Sellev found a map of Hunt's Mills showing the site locations of buildings associated with the Park which once stood there and gave us a copy of it which is very valuable to researchers.

We understand that the alarm system is to be installed this month- and then the collection finally moves in in entirety.


IMPORTANT! If there is anyone, member or non-member, who has *any* information that would contribute to our more complete understanding of the Hunt House and environs would they please make it available to me.

Edna Anness

UP-COMING EVENTS

The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor, and the City of Woonsocket Department of Planning & Development are jointly sponsoring a **Conference on Textile History**. The conference will run March 30 and 31 at Harris Hall, 169 Main Street in Woonsocket. The March 30 ses-

THE OFFICIAL OLDE NEWS CALENDAR

SUN	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT
				1 hunt house workday	2	3
4	5	6 hunt house workday	7	8 hunt house workday	9	10
11	12	13 hunt house workday	14	15 RJWC Fashion Show	16	17 
18	19	20 hunt house workday	21 Board Meeting	22 hunt house workday	23	24
25	26 March Meeting	27 hunt house workday	28	29 hunt house workday	30 National Conference on Textile History	31
1	2	3 hunt house workday	4	5 hunt house workday	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 hunt house workday	13	14
15	16 Lost Day for Tax Returns!	17 hunt house workday	18 Board Mtg 7:15	19 hunt house workday	20	21
22	23	24 hunt house workday	25	26 hunt house workday	27	28
29	30 April Meeting	31 hunt house workday				

sion will run from 7:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. and deal with "Interpreting Textile History: Conveying Social and Industrial History to the Public". The sessions on March 31 will run all day from

9:00 a.m. until 9:30 p.m and cover a variety of topics including labor unrest in the 1930s, 19th century working class life and even base-

next page

ball.

All of the sessions are free and open to the public. Doug Reynolds at the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor, (508) 278-7322 or Marjory Myers, Woonsocket Department of Planning and Development, (401) 762-6400 may be contacted for further information.

"Preservation and Remodelers: Old Properties-New Possibilities" a program designed for professionals and homeowners will be held in Boston, April 7. It will look at how working on a historic building differs from working on a newer structure. Sponsored by the National Historic Trust, the Center for Historic Houses and the Home Builders Institute.

Victorian Society 19th Century Studies will take place in Newport June 1-10 and London England July 7-26. Both sessions will study Victorian material culture by means of lectures and tours conducted by eminent scholars. Scholarships are available. For a descriptive brochure write the VSA, 219 S.

6th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106, or call (212) 627-4252.

The Association for Gravestone Studies will hold its **14th Annual Conference** in Bristol RI at the Roger Williams College, Thursday, June 21 through Sunday, June 24. The conference will focus on gravestones in the Narragansett basin. Anyone interested can call or write Rosalee F. Oakly, Executive Director at 46 Plymouth Road, Needham MA 02192. Telephone number is (617)455-8180.

PLAQUE COMMITTEE

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: A plaque program has an important role to play in the recognition and preservation of buildings that in one way or another represent the historical and architectural heritage of East Providence. Our city needs a plaque program and we believe it should be the Historical Society that initiates one. If you are interested in helping to develop goals and criteria for our own program please call Kit Rodman (434-4994) or volunteer at the March meeting.



East Providence Historical Society's

Annual Spring

PASTA SUPPER

to benefit the Hunt House Restoration

Saturday, March 31, 1990 at 6 PM
at Newman Congregational Church

Adults-\$6. Children under 10-\$3. (under 3-free)

(SAMPLE TICKET ONLY. FOR A REAL ONE OF YOUR
VERY OWN CALL 431-2055 OR 431-1750. AND HURRY!)

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East Providence Historical Society
P.O. Box 4774
East Providence, RI 02916